

# FIRE SAFETY



*Ideas to keep you  
safe at home.*



**EVERY 15 SECONDS**, a fire department responds to a fire somewhere in the United States. Most fires don't happen in homes. But most fire deaths and injuries do. The major causes of fatal home fires are misplaced smoking materials, heating equipment, arson and children playing with matches or lighters.

The United States and Canada have the highest fire death rates of any industrialized countries. Why? Our buildings are built to high standards and our fire departments are among the best in the world. The problem is people, and their lack of awareness about the importance of making fire safety a part of their everyday lives.

## **How long do you have to escape from a fire in your home?**

When people were asked this question in a recent survey, they answered in ways that were surprising. 58% said two minutes or more. 24% estimated they had more than 10 minutes to escape a home fire.

The truth is, you may have much less time to escape than you think. A typical living room fire can threaten the entire house in just a few minutes—producing life threatening conditions in upstairs bedrooms less than two minutes after the smoke alarm sounds. Your family needs to know how to get out at the first sign of a home fire.

## **Don't wait, plan your escape today**

Include everyone in the planning process. Draw your plan, marking two ways out of every room. Include windows. Pick a meeting place outside, well away from the building. Tell everyone to meet there after they've escaped. That way you can count heads and tell the fire department if anyone's trapped inside. Don't forget to call the fire department from a safe location.

## **Practice it**

Plans are great, but the only way to know if they work is to practice them. Hold a home fire drill. Getting out of your own home sounds easy, but your home can look very different if it's full of smoke. Children in particular need to practice. Children practice drills at school every month, but rarely at home. But you are far more likely to have a fire at home.

Have someone press the button on the smoke alarm as the signal for the drill to start. Get out quickly, but carefully. Everyone should go to the meeting place.

## **INSIDE**

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Escape Ladders -----       | 2 |
| Smoke Alarms -----         | 2 |
| Prevention Checklist ----- | 3 |
| Fire Dept. Resources ----  | 3 |
| Fire Extinguishers -----   | 4 |
| Apartment Safety -----     | 4 |

**Seattle Fire Department  
Fire Prevention Division  
220 3rd Avenue South  
Seattle, WA 98104**

For more fire safety information, visit our website at:

<http://www.cityofseattle.net/fire>

## FIRE DRILL CHECK LIST

- ☐ The escape plan has been discussed with all family members.
- ☐ Start the drill with everyone in their room, pretending to be asleep.
- ☐ Signal the start of the drill by sounding the smoke alarm. For battery-operated alarms, push the test button to make the alarm sound.
- ☐ Practice using your main escape routes first. Don't run. Just go quickly and calmly outside and to the meeting place.
- ☐ The family meeting place is located safely away from the building and out of the way of the arriving fire department.
- ☐ Everyone arrives at the family meeting place in under two minutes.
- ☐ Someone pretends to go call 911 for help. They know what information to give the 911 dispatcher.

### Tips for a Safe Escape

- 1** If you see smoke, try another way out. If you can't avoid the smoke, crawl under it on your hands and knees.
- 2** Test doors before you open them. If you touch the door and it is warm, use another escape route. If the door is cool, open it cautiously.
- 3** Do security bars on windows have quick-release devices? Bars need to be opened easily and quickly from the inside by everyone in the household.
- 4** Don't stop or go back for anything. Possessions can be replaced. You can't. Remember fire spreads quickly. Get out fast and stay out. Call the fire department as quickly as possible.

## SMOKE ALARMS SAVE LIVES

### Count Your Smoke Alarms.

The Seattle Fire Department recommends you install at least one smoke alarm on every level of your home, including one in every sleeping area.

### Check Your Smoke Alarms.

Press the test button on your smoke alarms each month to make certain they are still working.

### Vacuum Your Smoke Alarms.

Each month clean your smoke alarm of dust and cobwebs to keep them sensitive.

### Change Your Batteries.

The batteries in your smoke alarms need to be changed at least once a year. The Seattle Fire Department suggests you change your batteries in the fall when you change your clocks from Daylight Savings Time.



## ESCAPE LADDERS

One of the most important features of a home fire escape ladder is the presence of *standoffs*. These are protrusions that hold the ladder rungs away from the side of the house. Standoffs help steady the ladder and allow enough room for a secure toehold. The more standoffs on a ladder the better.

Home escape ladders come in two standard lengths—15 feet and 25 feet. The shorter length is adequate for most two story bedrooms, while the longer is used for three story rooms. Make sure that the ladder is easily deployed by the person who is meant to use it. Also check for the load limit. Ladders should be rated for at least 1,000 pounds.

### Where to Get Them

Local hardware and home improvement stores carry escape ladders. Check by calling around to see who is currently carrying them. Another source are safety supply stores. Look for them in the yellow pages under *safety equipment*.

### How To Use Them

Portable ladders work somewhat like a boat ladder. They are generally made from aluminum or plastic chain with rigid bars as the rungs of the ladder. After purchasing a ladder, make sure that it fits the specific window for which its intended. If the ladder is for a child's room, have the child practice putting the ladder out the window. Then have them practice climbing out, *but do this from a first floor window*. Do this as part of a family fire drill.

---

# HOME FIRE SAFETY CHECKLIST

## Heating

- ☐ Baseboard heaters do not touch any furniture or curtains, or other items stored on the floor.
- ☐ You have your chimneys and heating systems inspected, cleaned and repaired prior to the heating season.
- ☐ All portable heaters are placed at least three feet from bedding, furniture, and other flammable materials.
- ☐ Every fireplace is equipped with a sturdy metal screen.

## Electrical

- ☐ You use as few extension cords and plug adapters as possible.
- ☐ Extension cords you do use are in the open, not tacked to walls, under rugs, or through doorways.
- ☐ Small appliances, like the toaster, are unplugged when not in use.

## Housekeeping

- ☐ Matches and lighters are kept out of the reach of children in a secure place.
- ☐ Paint, varnish, and other flammables are stored in sturdy metal containers and in a cool place.
- ☐ You put ashes from the fireplace and barbecues in metal containers and only dispose of the contents when cold.

## Kitchen

- ☐ You keep your stove and oven clean of grease to prevent the occurrences of a fire.
- ☐ In the event of a grease fire, you know that the best thing to do is to put a lid on it.
- ☐ You always remain in the kitchen while the stove or oven are on. You never leave cooking unattended.
- ☐ You never use your oven to heat your home.

## Smoking

- ☐ Matches, lighters, and smoking materials are kept out of the reach of small children.
- ☐ No Smoking In Bed is a rule in your home.

## Smoke Alarms

- ☐ Smoke alarms are installed on a ceiling or high on the wall outside of the bedroom(s) on each level of your home. You have also considered putting smoke alarms inside bedrooms as well.
- ☐ You make certain that your smoke alarm battery is changed once a year.
- ☐ You test and clean your smoke alarm regularly.

## Escape Plan

- ☐ You have a plan of escape showing two ways out of every room in your home, especially bedrooms.
- ☐ You regularly practice your escape plan by holding fire drills in your home.
- ☐ Windows used for escaping can be opened easily.
- ☐ Your house numbers are clearly visible from the street.

Items that you did not mark may put you at a higher risk from fire. Take steps to make sure you are as fire safe as possible.

## Seattle Fire Department Fire Prevention Resources

### Children's Programs & Materials

206-386-1338

Preschool Program

Seattle Schools Program

FIREFLIES Magazine

Fire Stoppers Firesetting Intervention

### Community Education & Outreach

206-386-1337

Business Training Resources

Evacuation Plan Review

Fire Safety Seminars

Free Smoke Alarms

# FIRE EXTINGUISHERS



Properly operated, fire extinguishers can help stop a small fire before it has a chance to grow out of control. Home fire extinguishers can be purchased from a hardware or home improvement store. A multipurpose, ABC dry chemical extinguisher is the recommended model.

## Remember the P.A.S.S. Word

There are four basic steps to using a fire extinguisher.

## Pull

Pull the safety pin by grabbing the ring and twisting.

## Aim

Aim the hose at the base of the fire.

## Squeeze

Squeeze the handle.

## Sweep

Sweep the hose from side to side while discharging.

## and Get Out

If the fire gets bigger, close the door to slow the spread of heat and smoke and evacuate.


## Be Prepared

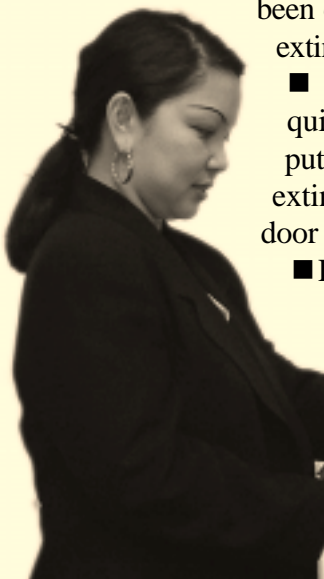
Training and practice are the best ways to prepare for emergencies. Make certain you know the P.A.S.S. system and understand how to safely use a fire extinguisher before you ever need to.

- Don't force yourself to fight a fire that makes you uncomfortable or puts you at risk.
- Always let someone know and make certain 911 has

been called before using an extinguisher on a fire.

- Fire extinguishers are small quick fixes. If you are unable to put out the fire with one extinguisher, leave and close the door behind you.

- 
- Don't let the fire come between you and your exit.
- Keep your back to the exit and the fire in front of you.



# APARTMENT FIRE SAFETY

## Protection

*Smoke alarms* are required to protect the sleeping areas in your home. Tenants are responsible for testing and changing the batteries—push the button on the alarm, it should beep loudly. If your smoke alarm uses batteries, replace them at least once a year. If it is wired into your building, ask your manager how to test them.



If you notice that *exit lights* in the halls or stairwells are not lit, or are broken or vandalized, notify the manager. *Corridors and stairwells* should be kept clear of trash and other obstructions. *Self-closing doors*—such as those leading into stairwells—should never be blocked open. These doors keep flames and smoke from spreading.

## Preparation

If you hear the building alarm, react immediately.  
Do not wait for instructions to begin evacuation. In a  
fire, seconds count.

If you discover a fire, pull the building alarm to alert others. If you can close doors to confine the fire, do so. Upon leaving the building, call 911 from a safe spot to make sure the fire department is coming. Be ready to tell them the address of the building.

Every family should have a *fire escape plan*—and should practice it. Know at least two ways out of the building. Use the stairs, not the elevators. Be sure to close all doors as you pass through, including your apartment door. Choose a *family meeting place* outside and well away from the building.

